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**The language in this policy does not create an employment contract between the employee and the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN). SCDDSN reserves the right to revise the contents of this policy, in whole or in part.**

#### **PURPOSE**

To establish the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs' (DDSN) workplace violence policy that will ensure a safer workplace and reduce the risk of violence.

#### **STATEMENT OF POLICY**

##### Prohibited Conduct

DDSN has a "zero tolerance" policy regarding any type of harassment, intimidation, or workplace violence committed by or against employees. Employees are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities.

This list of behaviors, while not inclusive, provides examples of conduct that is prohibited.

- Causing physical injury to another person;
- Making threatening communications including mail, telephone calls, electronic communications and faxes and verbal remarks;
- Aggressive or hostile behavior including, but not limited to, harassment, intimidation, stalking, or invasion of privacy that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress;
- Intentionally damaging employer property or the property of another employee;

- Possession of a weapon while on agency property or while on agency business; or
- Committing acts motivated by, or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence.

### Reporting Procedures

**Employees should call 911 for all emergency situations before calling the designated officials.** Any potentially dangerous situation must be reported immediately to a supervisor or the appropriate Human Resource Management Office. Reports can be made anonymously and all reported incidents will be investigated. Reports or incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately and information will be disclosed to others only on a need-to-know basis. All parties involved in a situation will be counseled and the results of investigations will be discussed with them. DDSN will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation.

### Risk Reduction Measures

**Hiring:** The Human Resource Management Office will take reasonable measures to conduct background investigations to review candidates' backgrounds and reduce the risk of hiring individuals with a history of violent behavior.

**Safety:** DDSN will conduct periodic inspections of premises to evaluate and determine any vulnerabilities to workplace violence or hazards. Any necessary corrective action will be taken to reduce all risks.

**Individual Situations:** While we do not expect employees to be skilled at identifying potentially dangerous persons, employees are expected to exercise good judgment and to inform the Human Resource Management office if any employee exhibits behavior which could be a sign of a potentially dangerous situations. Such behavior includes:

- Discussing weapons or bringing them to the workplace;
- Displaying overt signs of extreme stress, resentment, hostility or anger;
- Making threatening remarks;
- Sudden or significant deterioration of performance; or
- Displaying irrational or inappropriate behavior.

**Employees at Risk:** The Human Resource Management Office should be aware of employees who have been determined to be at risk for becoming victims of violence because of the nature of their job or because they are subject to harassment, violence, or threats from a non-employee. Human Resources and Security or AOD staff (for those facilities without security offices) will design a plan to prepare for any possible emergency situations.

**Employee Discipline:**

- Prior to discipline, assess the employee's potential for violence when planning the disciplinary meeting. In those situations where there may be potential for violence, the supervisor and another member of management should meet with the employee to present the disciplinary action. Consider having a security officer on standby out of sight if circumstances warrant.
- Conduct a discipline session privately in a professional manner to avoid further incitement of hostile behavior by the employee.
- If it is necessary to dismiss, conduct the dismissal session if possible at the end of the workday, after other employees have left.
- Clearly explain reason(s) for discipline.
- Provide an opportunity for the employee to discuss his/her disagreement with the disciplinary decision.

#### Dangerous/Emergency Situations

Employees who confront or encounter an armed or dangerous person should not attempt to challenge or disarm the individual. Employees should remain calm, make constant eye contact and talk to the individual. If a supervisor can be safely notified of the need for assistance without endangering the safety of the employee or others, such notice should be given. Otherwise, cooperate and follow the instructions given.

#### Enforcement

Threats, threatening conduct, or any other acts of aggression or violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. Any employee determined to have committed such acts will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Non-employees engaged in violent acts on the employer's premises will be reported to the proper authorities and fully prosecuted.

#### Training

All employees will be made aware of the provisions of the Workplace Violence Policy. New employees shall be briefed on the policy during their initial orientation training.

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Bill Barfield  
Deputy State Director, Administration  
(Originator)

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Stanley J. Butkus, Ph.D.  
State Director  
(Approved)